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PROFESSIONAL COMPLIMENTARY
PICTURES ON TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

SUNDAY:

MARRYBELL MADURO
SINGER
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

MONDAY:

ANDERSON BAHAMON
SINGER
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

TUESDAY:

JEAN PAUL
SAXOPHONIST
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

WEDNESDAY:

MAILLEYN ALVARADO
VIOLINIST
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

THURSDAY:

MARRYBELL MADURO
SINGER
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

FRIDAY:

MAILLEYN ALVARADO
VIOLINIST
7:00 TO 9:00 P.M.

SATURDAY:

RICKY THOMAS
GUITAR
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.



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Grand jury transcripts from abandoned Epstein investigation in Florida ordered released

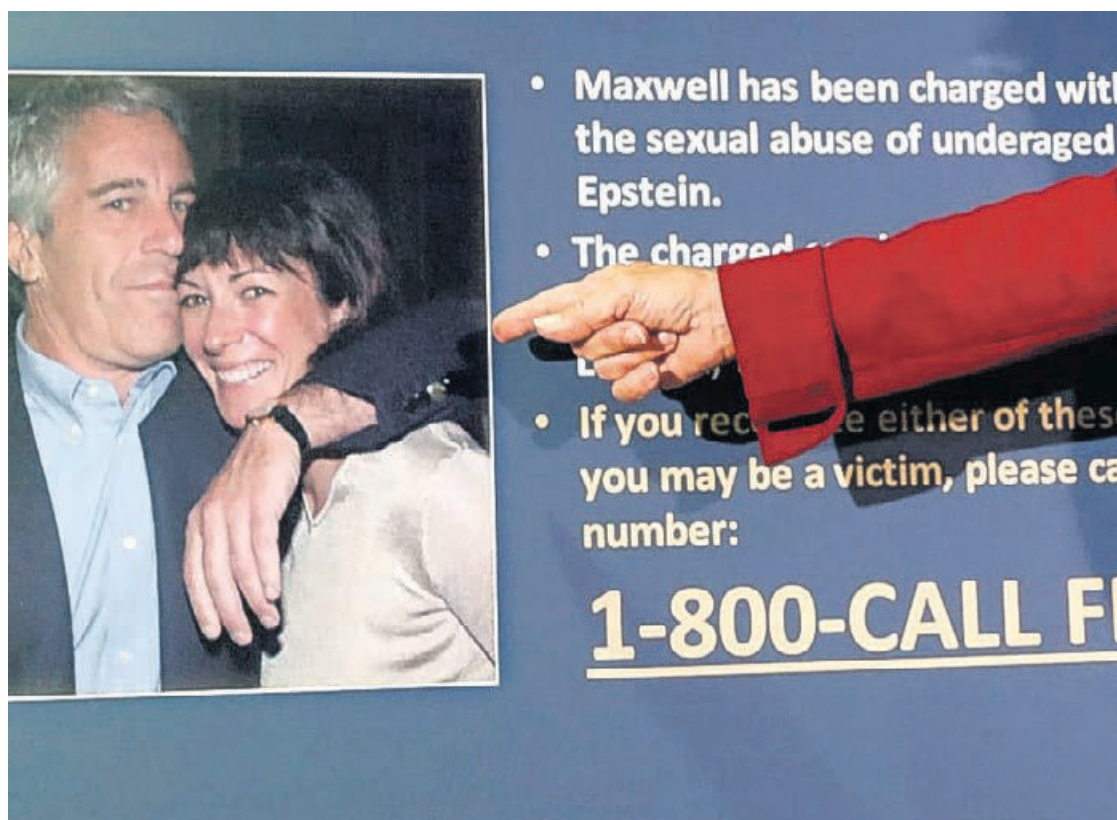
By **MIKE SCHNEIDER** and **MICHAEL R. SISAK**
Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — A federal judge on Friday gave the Justice Department permission to release transcripts of a grand jury investigation into Jeffrey Epstein's abuse of underage girls in Florida a case that ultimately ended without any federal charges being filed against the millionaire sex offender.

U.S. District Judge Rodney Smith said a recently passed federal law ordering the release of records related to the cases overrode a federal rule prohibiting the release of matters before a grand jury.

The law signed last month by President Donald Trump compels the Justice Department, FBI and federal prosecutors to release later this month the vast troves of material they have amassed during investigations into Epstein.

When the documents will be released is unknown. The government had



Audrey Strauss, Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, speaks during a news conference to announce charges against Ghislaine Maxwell for her alleged role in the sexual exploitation and abuse of multiple minor girls by Jeffrey Epstein, July 2, 2020, in New York. Associated Press.

asked the court for permission to include the usually secret grand jury records in the files they are required to make public under the new federal law, known as

the Epstein Files Transparency Act. The Justice Department hasn't set a timetable for when it plans to start releasing information, but the law set a deadline

of Dec. 19. However, the law also allows the Justice Department to withhold files that it says could jeopardize an active federal investigation. That's also

longstanding Justice Department policy. Files can also be withheld if they're found to be classified or if they pertain to national defense or foreign policy.

One of the federal prosecutors on the Florida case did not answer a phone call Friday and the other declined to answer questions.

The Justice Department had requested the unsealing of documents from three Epstein-related separate cases: the 2006-2007 Florida grand jury investigation into Epstein, his 2019 sex trafficking case in New York and Ghislaine Maxwell's 2021 sex trafficking case, also in New York. The Florida request was approved Friday. The New York requests are pending, with the Justice Department facing a Monday deadline to make its final filing a response to submissions by victims, Epstein's estate and Maxwell's lawyers. The judges in those matters have said they plan to rule expeditiously. □

Trump administration will expand travel ban to more than 30 countries, Noem says

By **REBECCA SANTANA**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration will be expanding its ban on travel for citizens of certain countries to more than 30, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said, in the latest restriction to come since a man from Afghanistan was accused of shooting two National Guard members.

The expansion would build on a travel ban already announced in June by the Republican administration, which barred travel to the U.S. for citizens from 12 countries and restricted access to the U.S. for people from seven others. In a social media post earlier this week, Noem had suggested more countries would be included.

Noem, who spoke late Thursday in an interview with Fox News Chan-

nel host Laura Ingraham, would not provide further details, saying President Donald Trump was considering which countries would be included.

In the wake of the National Guard shooting, the administration already ratcheted up restrictions on the 19 countries included in the

initial travel ban, which include Afghanistan, Somalia, Iran and Haiti, among others.

Ingraham asked Noem whether the travel ban was expanding to 32 countries and asked which countries would be added to the 19 announced earlier this year.



U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem speaks at a news conference at Harry Reid International Airport, Saturday, Nov. 22, 2025, in Las Vegas. Associated Press.

"I won't be specific on the number, but it's over 30. And the president is continuing to evaluate countries," Noem said.

"If they don't have a stable government there, if they don't have a country that can sustain itself and tell us who those individuals are and help us vet them, why should we allow people from that country to come here to the United States?" Noem said.

The Department of Homeland Security did not respond to requests for comment about when an updated travel ban might go into effect and which countries would be included in it.

Additions to the June travel ban are the latest in what has been a rapidly unfolding series of immigration actions since the shooting Thanksgiving week of two National Guard troops in

Washington.

Rahmanullah Lakanwal, who emigrated to the U.S. from Afghanistan after the U.S. withdrawal, has been charged with first-degree murder after one of the two victims, West Virginia National Guard Specialist Sarah Beckstrom, died of wounds sustained in the Nov. 26 shooting. The second victim, Staff Sgt. Andrew Wolfe, was critically wounded.

Lakanwal has pleaded not guilty.

The Trump administration has argued that more vetting is needed to make sure people entering or already in the U.S. aren't a threat.

Critics say the administration is traumatizing people who've already gone through extensive vetting to get to the U.S. and say the new measures amount to collective punishment. □

Suspect in DC pipe bomb case said to have confessed in interviews with investigators, AP sources say

By ERIC TUCKER, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The man accused of planting a pair of pipe bombs outside the headquarters of the Republican and Democratic national parties in Washington on the eve of the U.S. Capitol attack confessed to the act during an hours-long interview with investigators, two people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press.

Brian Cole Jr. spoke to law-enforcement officers for more than four hours after his arrest, a federal prosecutor, Charles Jones, said Friday during Cole's initial court appearance.

The prosecutor did not elaborate on what Cole said to investigators, but two people familiar with the matter told the AP he confessed to planting the devices on Jan. 5, 2021. Cole also indicated that he believed conspiracy theories around the 2020 election that President Donald Trump has insisted



An FBI truck departs the street where the FBI made an arrest and are investigating a house in Woodbridge, Va., Thursday, Dec. 4, 2025.

was stolen and expressed views supportive of Trump, said the people, who were not authorized to discuss by name an ongoing investigation and spoke on condition of anonymity. The details add to a still-emerging portrait of the 30-year-old suspect from

Woodbridge, Virginia, and it was not immediately clear what other information or perspectives he may have shared while cooperating with law enforcement following his arrest on Thursday.

U.S. Magistrate Moxila Upadhyaya ordered Cole

to remain in jail. He did not enter a plea and is due back in court Dec. 15 for a detention hearing.

Cole, wearing a tan-colored jail uniform, answered a few routine questions from the magistrate during Friday's brief hearing. Relatives of Cole attended

the hearing and called out words of encouragement as he was led out of the courtroom.

"We love you!" one shouted.

"We're here for you, baby," another said.

Defense attorney John Shoreman declined to comment on the charges after the hearing.

"We're in the very, very early stages," he said.

An FBI affidavit says investigators identified Cole as a suspect through analysis of credit card charges related to the purchase of pipe bomb components, information from cellphone towers and a license plate reader.

Nobody was hurt before the bombs were rendered safe, but the FBI has said both devices could have been lethal.

Federal authorities have not publicly disclosed any information about a possible motive or whether there is any connection to the attack on the Capitol the following day by Trump supporters. □

Associated Press.

The Supreme Court will decide whether Trump's birthright citizenship order violates the Constitution

By MARK SHERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court agreed on Friday to take up the constitutionality of President Donald Trump's order on birthright citizenship declaring that children born to parents who are in the Unit-

ed States illegally or temporarily are not American citizens.

The justices will hear Trump's appeal of a lower-court ruling that struck down the citizenship restrictions. They have not taken effect anywhere in the country.

The case will be argued in

the spring. A definitive ruling is expected by early summer.

The birthright citizenship order, which Trump signed Jan. 20, the first day of his second term, is part of his Republican administration's broad immigration crackdown. Other actions include immigration enforcement surges in several cities and the first peacetime invocation of the 18th-century Alien Enemies Act. The administration is facing multiple court challenges, and the high court has sent mixed signals in emergency orders it has issued. The justices effectively stopped the use of the Alien Enemies Act to rapidly deport alleged Venezuelan gang members without court hearings.

But the Supreme Court allowed the resumption of sweeping immigration stops

in the Los Angeles area after a lower court blocked the practice of stopping people solely based on their race, language, job or location.

The justices also are weighing the administration's emergency appeal to be allowed to deploy National Guard troops in the Chicago area for immigration enforcement actions. A lower court has indefinitely prevented the deployment. Birthright citizenship is the first Trump immigration-related policy to reach the court for a final ruling. His order would upend more than 125 years of understanding that the Constitution's 14th Amendment confers citizenship on everyone born on American soil, with narrow exceptions for the children of foreign diplomats and those born to a foreign occupying

force.

In a series of decisions, lower courts have struck down the executive order as unconstitutional, or likely so, even after a Supreme Court ruling in late June that limited judges' use of nationwide injunctions.

The Supreme Court, however, did not rule out other court orders that could have nationwide effects, including in class action lawsuits and those brought by states. The justices did not decide at that time whether the underlying citizenship order was constitutional.

Every lower court that has looked at the issue has concluded that Trump's order violates or likely violates the 14th Amendment, which was intended to ensure that Black people, including former slaves, had citizenship. □



An American flag flies at half-staff outside the Supreme Court Nov. 5, 2025, in Washington.

Associated Press.

US raid allegedly killed Syrian undercover agent instead of Islamic State group official

By OMAR ALBAM and
ABBY SEWELL

Associated Press

DUMAYR, Syria (AP) — A raid by U.S. forces and a local Syrian group aiming to capture an Islamic State group official instead killed a man who had been working undercover gathering intelligence on the extremists, family members and Syrian officials have told The Associated Press. The killing in October underscores the complex political and security landscape as the United States begins working with interim Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa in the fight against remnants of IS.

According to relatives, Khaled al-Masoud had been spying on IS for years on behalf of the insurgents led by al-Sharaa and then for al-Sharaa's interim government, established after the fall of former President Bashar Assad a year ago. Al-Sharaa's insurgents were mainly Islamists, some connected to al-Qaida, but enemies of IS who often clashed with it over the past decade.

Neither U.S. nor Syrian government officials have commented on al-Masoud's death, an indication that neither side wants the incident to derail improving ties. Weeks after the Oct. 19 raid, al-Sharaa visited Washington and announced Syria would join the global coalition against IS.

Still, al-Masoud's death could be "quite a setback" for efforts to combat IS, said Wassim Nasr, a senior research fellow with the Soufan Center, a New York-based think tank focused on security issues.

Al-Masoud had been infiltrating IS in the southern deserts of Syria known as the Badiya, one of the places where remnants of the extremist group have remained active, Nasr said. The raid targeting him was a result of "the lack of coordination between the coalition and Damascus," Nasr said.

In the latest sign of the in-



This undated handout photo provided by the al-Masoud family shows Khaled al-Masoud, who was killed at his home during a raid in the town of al-Dumayr in the Damascus countryside.

Associated Press.

creasing cooperation, the U.S. Central Command said Sunday that American troops and forces from Syria's Interior Ministry had located and destroyed 15 IS weapons caches in the south.

Confusion around the raid

The raid occurred in Dumayr, a town east of Damascus on the edge of the desert. At around 3 a.m., residents woke to the sound of heavy vehicles and planes.

Residents said U.S. troops conducted the raid alongside the Syrian Free Army, a U.S.-trained opposition faction that had fought against Assad.

The SFA now officially reports to the Syrian Defense Ministry.

Al-Masoud's cousin, Abdel Kareem Masoud, said he opened his door and saw Humvees with U.S. flags on them.

"There was someone on top of one of them who spoke broken Arabic, who pointed a machine gun at us and a green laser light and told us to go back inside," he said.

Khaled al-Masoud's mother, Sabah al-Sheikh al-Kilani, said the forces then surrounded her son's house next door, where he was with his wife and five daughters, and banged on the door.

Al-Masoud told them that he was with General Security, a force under Syria's Interior Ministry, but they broke down the door and shot him, al-Kilani said.

They took him away, wounded, al-Kilani said. Later, government security officials told the family he had been released but was in the hospital. The family was then called to pick up his body.

It was unclear when he

had died.

"How did he die? We don't know," his mother said. "I want the people who took him from his children to be held accountable."

Faulty intelligence

Al-Masoud's family believes he was targeted based on faulty intelligence provided by members of the Syrian Free Army.

Representatives of the SFA did not respond to requests for comment.

Al-Masoud had worked with al-Sharaa's insurgent group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, in its northwestern enclave of Idlib before Assad's fall, his cousin said. Then he returned to Dumayr and worked with the security services of al-Sharaa's government.

Two Syrian security officials and one political official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly, confirmed that al-Masoud had been working with Syria's interim government in a security role. Two of the officials said he had worked on combating IS.

Initial media reports on the raid said it had captured an IS official. But U.S. Central Command, which typically issues statements when a U.S. operation kills or captures a member of the extremist group in Syria, made no announcement. A U.S. defense official, when asked for more information about the raid and its target and whether it had been coordinated with Syria's government, said, "We are aware of these reports but do not have any information to provide."

The official spoke on condition of anonymity in order to discuss a sensitive military operation.

Representatives of Syria's defense and interior ministries, and of U.S. envoy to Syria Tom Barrack, declined to comment.

Increased coordination could prevent mistakes

At its peak in 2015, IS controlled a swath of territory across Iraq and Syria half

the size of the United Kingdom. It was notorious for its brutality against religious minorities as well as Muslims not adhering to the group's extreme interpretation of Islam.

After years of fighting, the U.S.-led coalition broke the group's last hold on territory in late 2019. Since then, U.S. troops in Syria have been working to ensure IS does not regain a foothold. The U.S. estimates IS still has about 2,500 members in Syria and Iraq. U.S. Central Command last month said the number of IS attacks there had fallen to 375 for the year so far, compared to 1,038 last year.

Fewer than 1,000 U.S. troops are believed to be operating in Syria, carrying out airstrikes and conducting raids against IS cells. They work mainly alongside the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces in the northeast and the Syrian Free Army in the south.

Now the U.S. has another partner: the security forces of the new Syrian government.

Airwars, a London-based conflict monitor, has reported 52 incidents in which civilians were harmed or killed in coalition operations in Syria since 2020.

The group classified al-Masoud as a civilian.

Airwars director Emily Tripp said the group has seen "multiple instances of what the U.S. call 'mistakes,'" including a 2023 case in which the U.S. military announced it had killed an al-Qaida leader in a drone strike. The target later turned out to be a civilian farmer.

It was unclear if the Oct. 19 raid went wrong due to faulty intelligence or if someone deliberately fed the coalition false information.

Nasr said that in the past, feuding groups have sometimes used the coalition to settle scores.

"That's the whole point of having a hotline with Damascus, in order to see who's who on the ground," he said. □

Burkina Faso plans to restore death penalty for treason, terrorism, espionage



Aerial view of Djibo town, Burkina Faso, Feb. 18, 2021.

Associated Press.

By **WILSON MCMAKIN**
Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — Burkina Faso's Council of Ministers has adopted a bill to restore the death penalty, targeting offenses such as treason, terrorism and espionage, authorities said. "The adoption of this bill is part of reforms ... to have a justice that responds to the deep aspirations of our people," Minister of Justice Edasso Rodrigue Bayala said in a Facebook post late Thursday. The death penalty was abolished in the country in 2018. The bill has to be adopted by parliament and re-

viewed by the courts before becoming law. Marceau Siviude, Amnesty International's Regional Director for West and Central Africa, called the move a "serious setback for human rights in Burkina Faso," and alarming "in the context of the ongoing crackdown on political opponents, human rights activists and journalists in Burkina Faso." Since taking power in a 2022 coup, the West African country's military leaders have launched sweeping reforms, including postponing elections that were expected to restore civilian rule and dissolving

the country's independent electoral commission. Burkina Faso has increasingly silenced critical media outlets in recent years. It suspended the BBC and Voice of America radio stations for their coverage of a mass killing of civilians carried out by the country's armed forces as well as arrested three prominent journalists earlier this year. The country is one of several West African nations where the military has taken over in recent years, capitalizing on widespread discontent with previous democratically elected governments over security issues. □

World Food Program warns of catastrophic hunger in Cameroon without additional funding

By **NGALA KILLIAN CHIMTOM and WILSON MCMAKIN**

Associated Press

YAOUNDE, Cameroon (AP) — The World Food Program warned Friday that hunger could reach catastrophic levels in parts of Cameroon if a funding target of at least \$67 million is not met. Speaking in the capital Yaoundé, Gianluca Ferrera, the WFP representative for Cameroon and Sao Tome and Principe, said progress made in the fight against hunger could be reversed without adequate funding. "Without this funding, most of the activities that WFP and partners have been imple-

menting will have to stop, bringing forward a number of risks," he said. Cameroon is the world's most neglected displacement crisis, according to a Norwegian Refugee Council report from earlier this year.

The country faces several severe crises: Boko Haram insurgency in the north, a separatist uprising in the two English-speaking regions, and the influx of refugees from the Central African Republic in the east. □



In this Nov. 6, 2017 file photo, the U.N. World Food Program's logo at the agency's headquarters in New York.

Associated Press.



M23 rebels escort government soldiers and police who surrendered to an undisclosed location in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Jan. 30, 2025.

Associated Press.

Renewed fighting in eastern Congo threatens 'historic' peace deal brokered by Trump

By **JUSTIN KABUMBA and RUTH ALONGA**
Associated Press

GOMA, Congo (AP) — Residents of eastern Congo said fighting has intensified despite a peace agreement that was signed by the Congolese and Rwandan presidents in Washington, D.C., with U.S. President Donald Trump in attendance.

Presidents Felix Tshisekedi of Congo and Paul Kagame of Rwanda met with Trump on Thursday to sign a wide-ranging deal that attempts to stop the ongoing war between the Congolese armed forces and the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group in the eastern part of Congo.

But residents said Friday the fighting has intensified in recent days, with the town of Kamanyola near the borders with Rwanda and Burundi bearing the brunt.

"People are fleeing; they are leaving the neighborhoods where the bombs are falling to go to areas considered calm, and others are fleeing towards Rwanda," Kamanyola resident Urbain Dunia told The Associated Press by telephone Friday.

"Yesterday, we saw that agreements were signed, but we don't see any positive impact on this situation, and that worries us," said Samson Alimasi, also from Kamanyola. "We only see bombs falling without knowing which side they are coming from."

Lauded by the White House as a "historic" agreement brokered by Trump, the pact between Tshisekedi and Kagame followed monthslong peace efforts by the U.S. and other partners including the African Union and Qatar. The agreement finalized a deal signed in June. M23 spokesperson Lawrence Kanyuka blamed the Congolese Army.

"It's the governing coalition that continues to bomb us. I've always told you that this regime never respects agreements. Besides, what happened in Washington doesn't concern us," Kanyuka said.

M23 leader Bertrand Bisimwa claimed in a post on X that the shelling reported by residents was coming from Burundian Army positions across the border. The AP was unable to independently verify the claim.

Throughout eastern Congo, residents have reported pockets of clashes. M23 and Congolese forces have repeatedly accused each other of violating the terms of the ceasefire agreed earlier this year. The Congolese army in the region of South Kivu, where Kamanyola is located, issued a statement blaming M23 and denouncing alleged bombing of schools by M23. □

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Putin and Modi hold talks and announce expansion of Russia-India trade ties

By **RAJESH ROY and AIJAZ HUSSAIN**

Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin held talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday at an annual summit and agreed to diversify mutual economic ties, as the United States presses India to revise its decades-old partnership with Russia.

The 23rd Russia-India Summit comes at a pivotal moment as the U.S. pushes for a Ukraine peace deal while seeking global cooperation. It will test New Delhi's efforts to balance relations with Moscow and Washington as the nearly four-year war in Ukraine grinds on.

Putin was received by Modi at an airport in New Delhi on Thursday. The Indian leader gave Putin a bear hug and a tight handshake with the gusto of an old friend.

Leaders outline Russia-India expanding ties

After the talks, Putin and Modi announced that India and Russia have finalized an economic cooperation program until 2030, which will help diversify mutual businesses to boost annual trade to \$100 billion by 2030. They also emphasized strong energy ties.

Bilateral trade between the two countries stood at \$68.7 billion in the last fiscal year ended March. The trade is heavily skewed in favor of Russia with deep deficits for India, which it is looking to bridge by pushing exports.

"To achieve this significant goal, a program for the development of Russian-Indian economic cooperation until 2030 has been agreed upon," Putin said. He said work is underway on an agreement for India to es-



Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi pose for a photo prior to their talks in New Delhi, India, Friday, Dec. 5, 2025.

establish a free trade zone with the Eurasian Economic Union, a Moscow-dominated economic grouping of several ex-Soviet nations, adding that it could help increase trade.

"Russia is a reliable supplier of energy resources and everything necessary for the development of India's energy sector," Putin said. "We are ready to continue ensuring the uninterrupted supply of fuel for the rapidly growing Indian economy." Before the summit talks, the Russian leader said the two countries "have a very trusting relationship when it comes to military-technical cooperation."

Modi said after the talks that the two countries will work toward early conclusion of a free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union. He also announced that India will soon start issuing free electronic visas for Russian tourists and groups visiting the country.

The Indian leader said energy security has long anchored India-Russia ties, with civil nuclear cooperation spanning decades. He added that such cooperation will continue, alongside collaboration in clean energy, shipbuilding, fertilizers and labor mobility.

US seeks to push India away from Russia. While India has historically maintained deep ties with Russia, critics say Putin's visit could strain relations with the European Union and the United States and might jeopardize negotiations for major trade agreements with both that are seen as critical for India's exports. U.S. President Donald Trump raised tariffs on Indian goods to 50% in August, citing New Delhi's discounted Russian oil. India has been the second biggest importer of Russian crude after China.

The U.S. says purchases of Russian oil help finance Moscow's war machine. In October, the U.S. sanc-

tioned two of Moscow's biggest oil producers to force countries like India to cut down on imports. Indian officials have said New Delhi has always abided by international sanctions and would do so in the case of Russia oil purchases.

India's foreign secretary Vikram Misri told reporters that the recent sanctions imposed on Russian oil were discussed.

Without specifying India's position on its purchases, Misri said the government's priority was to secure the energy needs of its 1.4 billion people.

Misri said India's private and state-run oil companies make decisions based on evolving market dynamics and commercial issues they confront while sourcing supplies.

"We are continuing our cooperation between the two countries," he said.

India and the U.S. set a target for the first tranche of a trade deal by the fall,

but the deal hasn't come through yet amid strains in relations, mainly because of New Delhi's unabated imports of Russian crude.

India is also in the final stages of talks on a trade agreement with the EU, which sees Russia's war in Ukraine as a major threat.

Given the timing and geopolitical context, Putin's India visit "underscores New Delhi's strategic tightrope walk between the West and the rest, chiefly Russia," said Praveen Donthi, a senior analyst with the International Crisis Group.

Donthi said India's tilt toward Russia dates back to the Cold War and persists despite its official non-aligned position. "The significant change now is its desire to be a strategic partner with the U.S. at the same time, which will be a diplomatic challenge," he added.

Defense and trade expansion on cards

Indian officials earlier said that Modi in the meeting with Putin would push for faster delivery of two further Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile systems. It has already received three under a 2018 deal worth about \$5.4 billion. The delay has been tied to supply chain disruptions linked to the war in Ukraine.

Misri said the defense ministers of India and Russia met Thursday. In a joint statement following the summit, the two sides said they have agreed to encourage joint manufacturing in India of spare parts and components for maintenance of Russian-origin arms and defense equipment. This would be done through transfer of technology and setting up of joint ventures. □

Aruban legends: Frenchman's Pass

(Oranjestad)—If you ever plan on taking a group tour of the island, you may pass through the Frenchman's Pass in Balashi. The Frenchman's pass (known to locals as "Franse Pas") remains a mysterious—and spooky—road of which its legend is told from generation to generation.

The history of the Frenchman's pass—and how it got its name—dates back to the colonization era, when the French tried to colonize the island, but were met with an angry mob of indigenous settlers, refusing to give up their land. However, as the French were heavily equipped with fire arms, the indigenous settlers began to retreat, and hid away in nearby caves. The French colonizers tried to smoke them out of the caves, but the indigenous settlers ended up inhaling too much smoke and most died in those caves. From then on, this passage was known as Frenchman's

Pass, and there have been many accounts of spirits roaming the area of Spanish Lagoon.

There are many ghost stories surrounding this area, but one of the most famous one involves a lonely hitchhiker, trying to find a ride back home in the dark rainy night.

Sometime after trying to hitch a ride home, the man saw a car approaching, appearing almost ghost-like in the rain. However, since he needed a ride real bad, he didn't think twice and jumped in. But to his horror, he noticed that there was no driver in the front. Paralyzed with fear, he didn't dare to get out, and the car started to move.

When approaching a sharp turn, the hitch hiker braced for impact, but just when he thought the car might drive straight off the road and crash, he saw a



hand appear out the window and turn the wheel. For the next few turns, the hand appeared again. After having had enough, the man decided to jump out and he ran to Santa Cruz.

Arriving at a nearby bar, he ordered a drink and began to tell everyone about his experience. Everyone grew quiet, because they

realized he wasn't some drunk messing around; he was telling the truth.

Sometime later, two men walked into the bar and one of them noticed the hitchhiker. He called out to his buddy and said: "Look, there's the idiot who sat in our car when we were pushing it!"

French man's pass is one of the few sites on the island that keeps the locals on their toes. While most ghost stories may not have real grounds—or some may even be a set up story for a joke, this pass holds a lot of value to our culture of folkloric story-telling.

Source: visitaruba.com

Planning on snorkeling? Get to know our Picuda!

(Oranjestad)—If you're ever planning on snorkeling during your vacation on Aruba, you may spot fish that you can't recognize. One of these may be the "Picuda", a very common fish that swims all year long in the waters of Aruba. Here's some information about the beloved Picuda.

Let's talk about the names of fish. Do you know your fish? This is an informative article that illustrate some fish and their names in Papiamentu, which the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, known as "Santa Rosa", wants to share and also obtain information from the public.

Picuda, *Sphyraena barracuda*, Greater Barracuda

Well known is the Picuda on the island—Barracuda in English. Its scientific name is *Sphyraena barracuda*. It is a widely caught fish. It is found throughout the year in our waters, where it is a so-called "ambush predator" that stays still or floats in the water waiting for its prey to approach so it can attack it with lightning speed. It is well known for fishermen, especially for

its white flesh in fish soup. In fishing culture, there are many other names, such as Pecho blanco, Blekito, Banana, or Bleki. The names vary according to size.

Description

The Picuda is a long fish, with a round body like a torpedo and silver in color with shiny black stripes. Below, the belly, is whiter, while the top part is darker. Its snout is very pointed, and the lower jaw is longer than the upper one. Its pedun-

cle, where the body meets the tail, is thick, while the tail also forms a crescent but in this case one more "full" than that of mullet or cone-fish. This reflects the hunting style of the Picuda. It needs to be able to accelerate quickly when the prey gets close.

In Aruba:

Picuda can be found in our waters around our island throughout the year. Picuda, in our waters, is edible without any problem. Picuda

is also a highly sought-after fish by sports fishermen or recreational fishermen because it puts up a good fight once hooked. It can be caught via trolling from a boat, casting from shore with a line or rod, or by jigging, casting the lure (artificial bait) and moving it with certain rod motions. □

Picture courtesy of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (Santa Rosa).



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Magnet Perfume Jewelry & Cosmetics | The Lazy Lizard
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Dining in? Try making some local favorites!
How to make "funchi"



(Oranjestad)—One of the most famous Aruban snacks or appetizers is "funchi hasa" (fried polenta sticks), a super easy meal that adults and children will both enjoy. Here's how to make it!

Before we start, get to know the basics

What is funchi hasa? Funchi, or Aruban polenta, is a popular side dish for local dishes, like soups, stews and fried fish. Made from a corn flour, water and butter mixture, this appetizer is traditionally eaten alongside a warm meal. However, locals also like to fry sticks of funchi for a quick and filling snack.

Ingredients (measured by heart)

1. Polenta flour/Funchi flour
2. Water
3. Butter
4. Salt to taste

Directions

Bring water to a boil in a medium-sized sauce pan. Add in some salt and butter to taste in the boiling water and let this dissolve and melt. Then, gradually add the flour while stirring with a wooden spoon. The mixture will start to begin to harden pretty fast, so be careful not to add too much. At this phase of cooking, you want a goopy thick mixture, but thin enough so you can continue to stir to get all the lumps out.

After reaching a semi-firm, yet flexible texture, grab a baking pan or any large, deep plate, and pour the mixture in. Be sure that this plate is wet or greased so that the mixture does not stick to the bottom. Let this cool completely while it firms up for the last time. Once it's cooled you can enjoy it as is, topped with some butter or



shredded cheese. Or, you can take it to another level of deliciousness.

When your funchi is firm enough, cut it into strips (size is up to you). Heat up some oil in a pan and fry those babies up! After frying, you can top it with some cheese or enjoy it with your favorite dipping sauce.□

Photo credit of fried funchi sticks: Jacqueline Felida on Pinterest.



"Aruba to us is romance"

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from Marc and Susan Reissner from Greenwood Village, Colorado.

They wrote to us saying: "Aruba to us is romance as we met here at the Sheraton casino in 1974; back to celebrate our 50th year of marriage! "

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers!□



Stimami. Sterilisami.

Don't miss great deals on assorted
hotel supplies at our

Warehouse Sale

Sunday

Dec 7, 2025

8 AM- 1 PM

Engelandstraat 5,
Oranjestad, Aruba.



Kick Off the Holiday Season with Amazing Deals on Hotel Supplies at the Stimami Sterilisami Warehouse Sale!

ORANJESTAD—Get ready for a fantastic event this Sunday, December 7th! Stimami Sterilisami is hosting a special Warehouse Sale to raise funds for our island-wide sterilization program. The sale will take place at the warehouse at Engelandstraat 5, starting at 8:00 AM and continuing until 1:00 PM—or until everything is sold.

This year's sale features a wide variety of assorted hotel supplies, including high-quality used furniture, kitchen items, tableware, décor, and much more.

With affordable prices and a wide variety of items, this event is the perfect opportunity to find special pieces for the upcoming Christmas holidays while supporting a meaningful cause. We encourage everyone to bring family and friends and enjoy a fun, purposeful day of community connection.

Important Information for Shoppers

Customers purchasing furniture or larger items are reminded that they will need to arrange their own transportation, as the organization will not be able to assist with moving or delivery. Additionally, all purchased items must be taken home during the sale hours, as we are unable to hold items for pickup on a later date. Both cash and card payments will be accepted.

Support a Meaningful Cause

Every purchase made at the Warehouse Sale goes directly toward Sti-

mami Sterilisami's spay and neuter program, which has already helped sterilize more than 45,000 dogs and cats across Aruba. This important effort continues to be possible thanks to the generosity of our donors, the dedication of our volunteers, and the strong support of our community.

This event not only offers fantastic holiday deals, but it also gives you the chance to make a real difference. With every purchase, you're adding your own "grain of sand" to help ensure fewer stray dogs and cats in Aruba and to support a kinder, more caring island. We look forward to seeing you there!

About Stimami Sterilisami Foundation

Stimami Sterilisami is a non-profit organization dedicated to humanely and effectively reducing the number of abandoned dogs and cats in Aruba through its national spay and neuter program. Every donation is used to cover the costs of spaying and neutering of dogs and cats for individual pet owners and volunteer organizations. Our books are audited and open to the public. To contribute to this important cause, you can make a direct contribution to Stimami Sterilisami Foundation via bank transfer: ☐

Bank: Aruba Bank
Account Number: 6012630190
Account Name: FUNDASHON STIMAMI STERILISAMI
Swift Code: ARUBAWAX

Another treasure of Aruba's beaches: Sea Glass!

(Oranjestad)—It is hard to imagine this happening today, but years ago people dumped all kinds of refuse straight into the ocean, including old cars, and their household garbage, which of course included lots of glass. Over the next 30 years the pounding waves cleaned the beach, by breaking down everything but glass and pottery. The pounding waves washed the trash up and down, back and forth. Tons of polished, broken glass pieces were created by the pounding surf. These smoothened, colored glass particles then settled along the sea shore in millions, and that is why you can find these beautiful and colorful pieces on the north shore beaches of Aruba.

Especially on the strip on white sand between the famous Natural Bridge" and the huge red anchor close to "Grapefield" beach you will be able to find your own pieces of sea glass. The sea glass that was created is the product of a very long and interesting process.

It can take anywhere from 10 to 30 years to make sea glass.

The name for any piece of glass that finds its way to the ocean and tumbles around in the water long enough is "Sea glass.

The colorful pieces of glass are being used for decoration, handcrafts and jewelry!

Once glass makes its way into the ocean, the glass is broken up into shards and is tumbled around in the water, where sand and other rocks act like sandpaper to smooth out its rough edges.

Sometimes as the sea glass is passed through fire, it becomes fire glass, the rarest of sea glass with certain inclusions, just like precious gems.

For years, the water beat against the different kinds of trash being dumped. Glass, household appliances and even motor parts were discard-



ed on the beach. The waves and weather conditions wore down the overwhelming amount of garbage in the water, creating millions of beautiful smooth rocks.

It's hard to believe the short-sighted mistakes we were making that could have potentially ruined these beautiful beaches. But thanks to natural processes, the ocean transformed the trash into the sea glass.

Each colored gem on the beach has its own story.

The ruby red glass stones are typically from old car tail-lights.

Then, the sapphire rocks are the remnants of broken apothecary bottles. The most common and the easiest to find are the brown, green and clear glass.

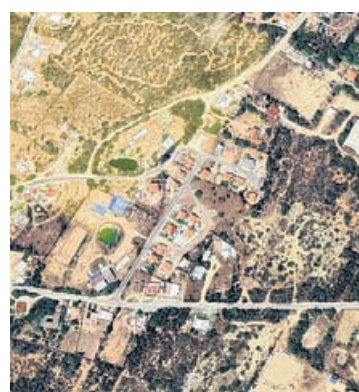
If you like to see the sea glass for yourself, and be in awe of the power of nature, rent a car or jeep and go explore our deserted beaches on the north side of the island. Make it a fun family day!

Even if we didn't mean to pollute the Beaches how we did, it is inspiring to see just how the earth can correct our mistakes.

Funny, how trash can change into treasures!

Everybody knows that you are not allowed to take local shells home, but the people working at the airport have no problem you taking sea glass home. A few of those pieces make great souvenirs. You can place them in a wine glass or large bottle for decoration and every time you look at it a smile will light up your face thinking back of your unforgettable Aruba vacation!☐

Aruba's neighborhoods; the meaning behind their names



Just like any other country, Aruba has unique and beautifully named neighborhoods that all form a part of its culture and development. Many of these names have a historical background and meaning that teaches us about the island and its rich culture every day.

With this series, we want to take you on a journey of discovery, where you'll learn not only the beautiful names but the history behind it that gives it life and meaning.

Anabui/Tierra Del Sol

This neighborhood can be seen on Van Raders map and Werbata as Anna Boei. Anna Boei is a name of which there isn't much information about its origin.

The best historians were able to deduce is that this name came to be because of a miscommunication between Van Spengler and the natives who were living on the island. In the Arawak/Taino language one can find the

word Anaiboa, which consists of Ana meaning flower or the best and Iboa; the juice of a cassava, which together would mean "the best juice of a cassava".

If one assumes that the actual word heard was Anaboio instead, consisting of Ana meaning the best and Boio (bohio); house, the iteration of Anabui would mean "the best house." This is the origin that has been more or less speculated and assumed for the word Anabui and its meaning.

During the Second World War and later, this area was used as a terrain for training of shooting by militia and

later on Korps Mariniers (the marines of Aruba). By the end of the previous century a large part of Anabui was developed to have luxurious villas and a golf course, which lead to it getting the name Tierra Del Sol, Spanish for Land of the Sun. The name is not an official name, but the name of the development project that took place. It is hoped that the original and 'old' name of Anabui is never lost and now it will be remembered by both locals and tourists.

Angochi

This name can be seen on the Werbata map with little and cursive letters. It is the unofficial name for the area

given by a tenant to the land that was rented to him.

The biggest probability that historians believe is that it comes from native descent, during the time in the 19th century where Mestizos still lived on Aruba. The name can't really be explain and according to books on its history seems to be more of a sign of corruption.

However, it seems to come from combining A(n), which is a generalizing prefix and Goeiza, which means 'the spirit of a living man'. Angochi remains more of a guess.

This neighborhood's abbreviation is; An.

Aruba's cultural and literary development: Then and now

(Oranjestad)—The Aruban culture has seen many substantial developments over the course of a century. With the introduction of the Lago Refinery at the turn of the 20th century, followed by the breakout of the Second World War and the general incentive for political independence during the mid-century, a cultural identity on the island began to take form and have since developed through international and local influences.

In the pre-industrial era of the 19th century, much could not be said about a cultural identity on the island. Still being a part of a Dutch colonial territory at the same, as well as not having political or economic autonomy (Curacao was the center of commerce, cultural life, and political management of the Netherland Antilles at the time), the small population of Aruba consisted mostly of farmers and fishermen, tending to their crops and their cattle, or going out to fish to provide for their family. As Quito Nicolaas states in his article *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* (Literary History of Aruba: Cultural Life), "during the pre-industrial period, there were no significant economic activity that could have created a cultural ambience, with



only one way to generate profit at the time for the sub existence of Aruban families."

It wasn't until the introduction of the Lago Refinery in San Nicolas in 1928, that the island saw a small boom in cultural manifestations and entertainment, as farmers left the 'cunucu' (country) life to work in the refinery, which resulted in Aruba acquiring a different economic pillar. Before this, entertainment and cultural manifestations were mostly experiences by local parishes and the island's elite, who often partook in cultural and entertaining activities around the island, like going to the movie theater or coming together to

share poetry on Sundays after church.

Literary life

Throughout the 19th century and up until the 1940s, there were also not much trace of a cultural climate for the cultural-literary sector on the island. Primary education was introduced on the island mid-19th century, followed by secondary and higher education around the late 30's and 40's. It wasn't until the 1950s, with the introduction of the E.R.N.A agreement in 1951 and the signing of the Statute in 1954, which allowed more space for and control over the economic and cultural development of Aruba, that the literary life on the island be-

gan to grow substantially compared to decades before. This was in response to local institutions established in the 1940s for cultural and literary growth on the island, but that did not yet capture the attention of the general public. The 1950 brought with it a boom of literary production on the island, like those of V.S. Piterrella, as well as migrant authors José Ramón Vicioso y Rings William Rufus, who have also contributed to the literary development on the island. The literary movement was further promoted by local broadcasters Voz di Aruba and Radio Kelkboom, with their regular broadcast of literary works.

The 50s and 60s also saw the influence of international cultures, especially that of the United States. During this time, because of international influences as well as the continued prosperity of the oil refinery, cultural traditions in Aruba began to really take form and become widespread, as different worldly and local concepts were introduced in the Aruban society. With the establishment of local television broadcast station Tele-Aruba in 1963, and with time and possibilities, local programs such as "Nos Tera" ("Our Land") started to pay more attention to the Aruban culture and worked to form a cultural consciousness in the community. The 1960s also saw the rise of local authors and artists, who were more comfortable in producing works in our native tongue, Papiamentu, but who also produced works in Spanish, English and Dutch. This new phenomenon was in response to the interaction between economic growth, individual prosperity, cultural life and literary expression.

The 21st century

Nowadays, international influence on our culture is still prevalent, especially those from Latin America, the United States and The Netherlands. Nevertheless, there also exists a strong cultural identity and traditions that are exclusive to the Aruban culture, often manifesting during traditional celebrations, like Dia di San Juan/ Dera Gay (St. John's Day), Dia di Himno y Bandera (National Hymn and Flag Day), Camping during Easter and much more. With the surge of social media in the last decade, artistic voices, especially those of the younger generation, has become even more prevalent and easily accessible to the community of Aruba through online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. □

Source: *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* by J.R. "Quito" Nicolaas

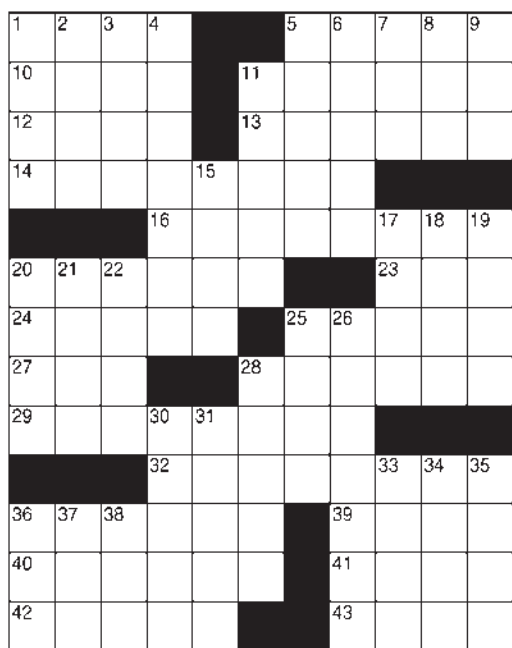


CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Brothers' home
5 Gave a hint
10 Wood strip
11 Som-nolent state
12 Love, Latin-style
13 Mandrill relative
14 Forest floor sight
16 Restau-rant card
20 Fairy
23 Female rabbit
24 Fragrant flower
25 Quartet member
27 Film's Lupino
28 Flour merchant
29 Billiards variant
32 Oscillo-scope sight
36 Small
39 Magnetic metal
40 Sights
41 Raunchy
42 Rotates
43 Highlands girl
- 2 Malek of "Bohe-mian Rhapsody"
3 Heaps
4 Added for free
5 Construc-tion site sight
6 Clothing brand
7 First número
8 Green prefix
9 Bear lair
11 Steak choice
15 Mayor's domain
17 Fans' favorite
18 Foot feature
19 Rip
20 Go around
21 Toenail treat-ment, for short
22 Speckled horse
25 Foul
26 Malice
28 Lion features
30 Endorse online
31 Quick snacks
33 Open space
34 Wedding words
35 Halts
36 Trading spot
37 Outback bird
38 Mariner
- 1 Commotion



12-14

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-14

CRYPTOQUOTE

OYPAXSUZX AX UBXS SPTRG
OYPAXSUZX JYVF JV
OVRVNPZSV AS NG CADAFC
SYV RACYS BQ RBDV SB
SYBXV JYB FVVL AS UBXS.

— PTSY OZPSVP XSZERVSBF
Cryptoquote: SOME PEOPLE ARE
WORTH MELTING FOR. — OLAF, "FROZEN"

Cruise ship Schedule: Dec. 01 - 07 2025

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
MON	01	MARELLA DISCOVERY 2	08.00	20.00	C	1
TUE	02	ROTTERDAM	07.00	****	B	1
		AIDAMAR	08.00	18.00	C	1
		OASIS OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	I	1
WED	03	ROTTERDAM - Dept.	****	17.00	B	
		BRITANNIA	07.00	18.00	C	1
		CARNIVAL VISTA	08.00	16.00	I	1
		FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1
THU	04	CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE	08.00	20.00	B	1
		CORAL PRINCESS	09.00	18.00	C	1
		SEABOURN OVATION	09.00	22.00	I	1
		SILVER SHADOW	08.00	18.00	H	1
FRI	05	CARNIVAL LIBERTY	09.00	22.00	C	1
SAT	06	KONINGS DAM	07.00	16.00	B	1
		AIDAPERLA	09.00	22.00	C	1
		STAR CLIPPER	09.00	18.00	G	1
SUN	07	CARIBBEAN PRINCESS	09.00	22.00	C	1
		FREEWINDS - Dept.	****	22.30	E	-

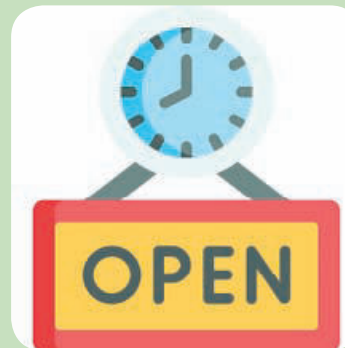
Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.



Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.



Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 8 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.



Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku



Difficulty: ★★★★★

12/6

Answer to previous puzzle

6	7	8	4	1	3	9	2	5
2	9	4	5	6	7	3	8	1
5	1	3	2	8	9	4	6	7
3	4	9	6	7	5	2	1	8
8	6	1	9	2	4	7	5	3
7	2	5	8	3	1	6	4	9
9	3	6	1	5	2	8	7	4
1	8	7	3	4	6	5	9	2
4	5	2	7	9	8	1	3	6

Difficulty: ★★★★★

12/5

EU hits Elon Musk's X with 120 million euro fine for breaching bloc's social media law

By KELVIN CHAN
AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — European Union regulators on Friday fined X, Elon Musk's social media platform, 120 million euros (\$140 million) for breaches of the bloc's digital regulations, in a move that risks rekindling tensions with Washington over free speech.

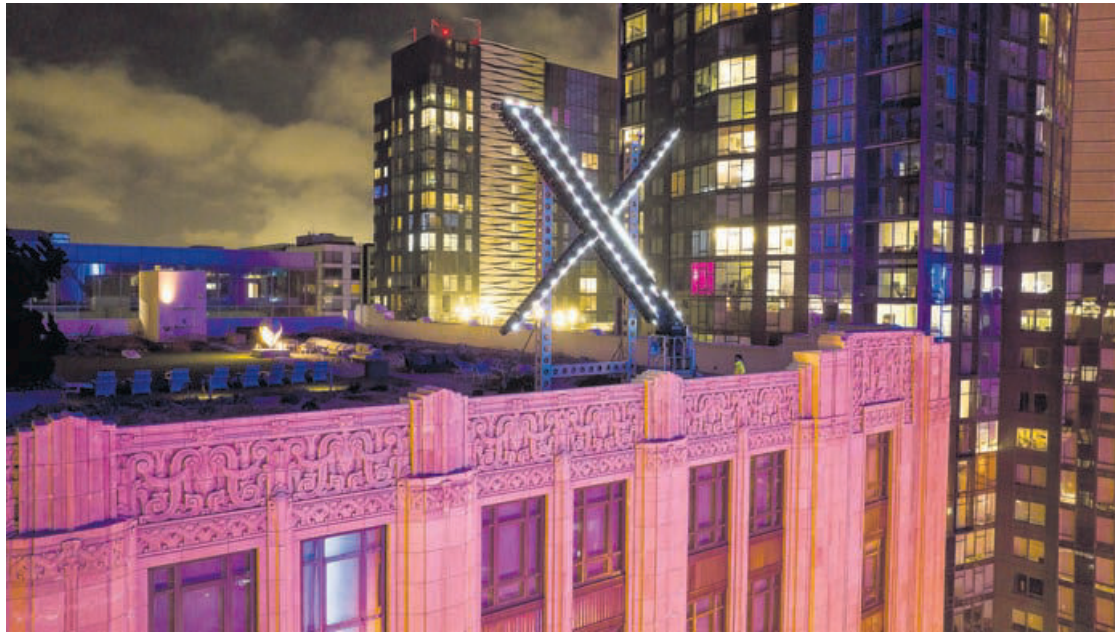
The European Commission issued its decision following an investigation it opened two years ago into X under the 27-nation bloc's Digital Services Act, also known as the DSA. It's the first time that the EU has issued a so-called non-compliance decision since rolling out the DSA. The sweeping rulebook requires platforms to take more responsibility for protecting European users and cleaning up harmful or illegal content and products on their sites, under threat of hefty fines. The Commission, the bloc's executive arm, said it was punishing X because of three different breaches of the DSA's transparency requirements. The decision could rile President Donald Trump, whose administration has lashed out at digital regulations, complained that Brussels was targeting U.S. tech companies and vowed to retaliate.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio posted on his X account that the Commission's fine was akin to an attack on the American people. Musk later agreed with Rubio's sentiment.

"The European Commission's \$140 million fine isn't just an attack on @X, it's an attack on all American tech platforms and the American people by foreign governments," Rubio wrote. "The days of censoring Americans online are over."

Vice President JD Vance, posting on X ahead of the decision, accused the Commission of seeking to fine X "for not engaging in censorship."

"The EU should be supporting free speech not attacking American companies



Workers install lighting on an "X" sign atop the company headquarters in downtown San Francisco, July 28, 2023.

Associated Press.

over garbage," he wrote. Officials denied the rules were intended to muzzle Big Tech companies. The Commission is "not targeting anyone, not targeting any company, not targeting any jurisdictions based on their color or their country of origin," spokesman Thomas Regnier told a regular briefing in Brussels. "Absolutely not. This is based on a process, democratic process."

X did not respond immediately to an email request for comment.

EU regulators had already outlined their accusations in mid-2024 when they released preliminary findings of their investigation into X.

Regulators said X's blue checkmarks broke the rules because on "deceptive design practices" and could expose users to scams and manipulation. Before Musk acquired X, when it was previously known as Twitter, the checkmarks mirrored verification badges common on social media and were largely reserved for celebrities, politicians and other influential accounts, such as Beyonce, Pope Francis, writer Neil Gaiman and rapper Lil Nas X.

After he bought it in 2022, the site started issuing the badges to anyone who wanted to pay \$8 per month.

That means X does not meaningfully verify who's behind the account, "making it difficult for users to judge the authenticity of accounts and content they engage with," the Commission said in its announcement. □



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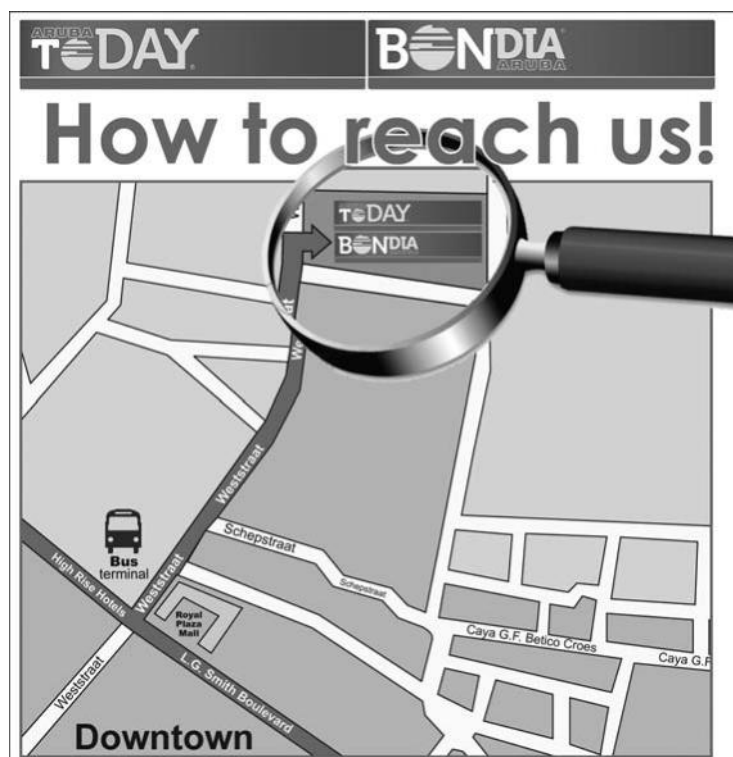
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Oranjestad

Hospital 7:00 pm / 10:00pm
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San Nicolas

Imsan 24 hours
Tel. 524 8833

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Central: Tel. 585 1965

San Nicolas:

Aloe: Tel. 584 4606

OTHER

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Urgent Care 586 0448
Walk-In Doctor's Clinic
+297 588 0539

EMERGENCY

Police	100
Oranjestad	527 3140
Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

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Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

TRAVEL INFO

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American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

AID FOUNDATIONS

Aruba Food Bank
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FAVI- Visually Impaired
Tel. 582 5051
Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989
Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400
Centre for Diabetes
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Tel. 582 4433

Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

What to know about the Eurovision Song Contest as Israel's participation sparks walkouts

By JILL LAWLESS and JAMEY KEATEN

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The Eurovision Song Contest, which aims to be an upbeat celebration of music and unity, is facing the biggest crisis in its seven-decade history after four countries walked out of the competition over Israel's participation and others weighed whether to join the boycott.

Spain, the Netherlands, Ireland and Slovenia announced they will not take part in the 2026 contest in Vienna in May after organizers declined to expel Israel over its conduct of the war against Hamas in Gaza.

Iceland is considering whether to follow suit.

The walkouts cast a cloud over the future of what's meant to be a feel-good cultural party, dealing a blow to fans, broadcasters and the contest's finances.

Eurovision expert Paul Jordan said Friday "it's unlikely we'll see a mass exodus" but that 2026 will be a "tense year."

A contest divided over Israel and Gaza

Founded in 1956, in part to help unite a shattered continent after World War II, Eurovision pits acts from dozens of countries against one another for the continent's musical crown.

Overtly political symbols and lyrics are prohibited, but global tensions have often imposed themselves. Russia, for example, was expelled in 2022 after its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Tensions rose again after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel, which killed some 1,200 people, and Israel's subsequent campaign in Gaza that has left more than 70,000 people dead.

The last two Eurovision contests have seen pro-Palestinian protests both outside the venues and inside, forcing organizers to clamp down on politi-



Singer Yuval Raphael, from Israel, holds the national flag during a dress rehearsal for the Grand Final of the 69th Eurovision Song Contest, May 16, 2025, in Basel, Switzerland.

Associated Press.

cal flag-waving.

A number of performers and countries have called for the exclusion of Israel, which has taken part in Eurovision since 1973, one of a few non-European countries to compete.

Organizers sought a compromise

The Geneva-based European Broadcasting Union a group of public broadcasters from 56 countries that runs Eurovision tried to assuage concerns by tightening rules on contest voting and campaigning in response to allegations that Israel manipulated the public vote in favor of its competitor Yuval Raphael.

She came second in this year's contest behind Austrian singer JJ.

The EBU's general assembly approved the new rules Thursday, but did not hold a vote on Israel's participation.

It said "a large majority of members" felt the contest "should proceed as planned, with the additional safeguards in place."

Eurovision Director Martin Green told Swedish television that the meeting reaffirmed "the belief that the Eurovision Song Con-

test shouldn't be used as a political theater. It must retain some sense of neutrality."

Some countries walked out

Immediately after the EBU decision, broadcasters RTVE in Spain, AVROTROS in the Netherlands, RTÉ in Ireland and Slovenia's RTVSLO announced they were pulling out.

RTVE said the situation in Gaza, despite the recent ceasefire, and "Israel's use of the contest for political purposes, make it increasingly difficult to maintain Eurovision as a neutral cultural event." RTÉ said participation was "unconscionable given the appalling loss of lives in Gaza."

Icelandic broadcaster RUV, which had recommended Israel be barred, said its chiefs will meet Wednesday to discuss whether to join the walkout.

Other countries' broadcasters, including Norway's NRK and Britain's BBC, welcomed the decision to keep Israel in the competition.

"We support the collective decision made by members of the EBU," the BBC said in a statement.

"This is about enforcing the rules of the EBU and being inclusive."

French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said his country opposes a cultural boycott of Israel.

"I am pleased that Eurovision did not give in to pressure, and that France helped prevent a boycott of Israel in this forum," he wrote on X.

"I deeply regret that several European television channels made a different choice."

Israel welcomed organizers' decision

Israeli President Isaac Herzog said on social platform X that he was "pleased" Israel will again take part and hoped "the competition will remain one that champions culture, music, friendship between nations and cross-border cultural understanding." Some Israelis said they were glad their country was participating but felt the debate around them was unfair.

"I'm happy but I'm not dancing in the streets," Izhar Cohen, who won Eurovision in 1978, told The Associated Press in Tel Aviv.

"Eurovision should be a meeting and gathering

together with no politics of all the people from all nations," he said.

Tel Aviv resident Bret Katz said "it's a terrible, terrible thing to ostracize a country and not to understand who was attacked on October 7, 2023."

A blow for fans and finances

The boycotting countries will not send a musical act to the 2026 contest and will not broadcast it. That will likely cut into viewership of a contest that typically draws more than 150 million viewers.

Fans in the boycotting countries should still be able to watch on digital platforms including YouTube, and another Dutch broadcaster, NPO, said it will air the show in the Netherlands.

The boycotts are a financial blow to Eurovision, which is funded largely by participating broadcasters and to boycotting public broadcasters at a time when many are under financial pressure from government funding cuts and competition from social media.

The EBU does not disclose how much each country pays, but the pullouts include Spain, one of the "Big Five" large-market countries that contribute the most to the contest.

So far, more than two dozen countries have confirmed they will compete in Vienna, including heavyweights like seven-time champion Sweden.

The EBU says a final list of participants will be released before Christmas. The boycott is offset to an extent by the return of Bulgaria, Moldova and Romania to Eurovision after periods of absence because of financial and artistic reasons.

Jordan said viewing figures would be closely watched, "and if they are significantly down, then that'll probably raise alarm bells."

"But I think overall the contest is a sturdy thing," he said. □

Heather Gibbs testifies NASCAR offer was 'like a gun to the head,' Michael Jordan takes stand

By JENNA FRYER

AP Auto Racing Writer

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) —

The daughter-in-law of race team owner Joe Gibbs gave emotional testimony Friday in the federal antitrust case against NASCAR about the chaotic six-hour period in which teams had to sign an extension on a new revenue model or forfeit their charters.

"The document was something in business you would never sign," said Heather Gibbs, who is also a licensed real estate agent. "It was like a gun to your head: if you don't sign, you have nothing."

Charters are the equivalent of the franchise model used in other sports and in NASCAR it guarantees every chartered car a spot in all 38 races, plus a defined payout from the stock car series. The system was created in 2016, and during the two-plus years of bitter negotiations on an extension teams begged for the renewable charters to be made permanent for revenue stability.

When NASCAR refused to make them permanent and gave the teams six hours in September 2024 to sign the 112-page extension, 23XI and Front Row Motorsports were the only two organizations out of 15 to refuse.

They instead filed the antitrust suit that opened this week.

23XI is owned by retired NBA great Michael Jordan and three-time Daytona 500 winner Denny Hamlin, and Front Row is owned by fast food franchiser Bob Jenkins.

They allege the top motorsports series in the United States is a monopolistic bully.

Jordan was called to the witness stand Friday afternoon with U.S. District Judge Kenneth Bell wryly noting the courtroom and an overflow room nearby with a video feed were packed.

Heather Gibbs became co-owner of Joe Gibbs Racing the day after her husband,



Front Row Motorsports owner Bob Jenkins, left, and 23XI co-owner Denny Hamlin arrive in the Western District of North Carolina on Monday Dec 1, 2025 in Charlotte, N.C.

Associated Press.

Coy, unexpectedly died in his sleep the same night their son, Ty, won NASCAR's second-tier Xfinity Series championship in 2022. Coy Gibbs had moved into a leadership role with JGR following the death of his older brother, J.D., in 2019. Because Gibbs had lost both his sons and had built the team as a legacy for his family, his daughter-in-law took an active role in the organization and personally participated in negotiations for the 2025 charter extensions. She expressed her dissatisfaction with NASCAR's refusal to make the charters permanent in a letter she sent to NASCAR leadership in May 2024.

When NASCAR made its final offer at 6 p.m. on a Friday night with just hours to sign, the agreement did not include permanent charters. Gibbs testified the organization was devastated.

"Everything was going so fast, the legacy of Coy, the legacy of J.D., everyone at JGR was very upset," she told the jury. She said her father-in-law called NASCAR chairman Jim France pleading for a resolution.

"Joe said, 'Jim, you can't do this,'" she said. "And Jim was done with the conver-

sation."

Heather Gibbs said she had to leave to take her son to a baseball game in Chapel Hill and left worried about her father-in-law, who was 84 at the time.

"I left him sitting in the dark, listening to his blood sugar monitors going off," she testified. "We decided we had to sign. We can't lose everything. I did not think it was a fair deal to the teams."

Joe Gibbs is both a Hall of Fame NASCAR owner and NFL Hall of Fame coach. He led the Washington football team to three Super Bowl titles and JGR has won five Cup Series championships; Heather Gibbs joked it should be six but Hamlin let one slip away in November. Hamlin drives for JGR but is co-owner of 23XI.

JGR has 450 employees, charters for four Cup cars and relies solely on outside sponsorship and investors to keep the team afloat. The team will mark its 35th season next year and Gibbs told the jury that JGR needs permanent charters to protect its investment in NASCAR. "It's the most important point, a permanent place in their history books," she testified. "It is absolutely vital to the teams for us to

know we have security, it can't be taken away, to know what we've invested in is ours."

Heather Gibbs also testified about the letter she sent NASCAR executives earlier in 2024 following a meeting with them in which she said commissioner Steve Phelps offended her by saying JGR spent recklessly on its race team. The letter was introduced into evidence Thursday.

"We've put 32 years into investing and building a dream, building careers, building families, and build-

ing NASCAR. If the financial model made sense, we would not have had to work with an outside investor," she wrote. "If our teams were financially healthy and did not solely rely on sponsorship, I would sleep better at night, not worrying about when the torch is passed on."

"We have invested not only our time but our family in this sport. We have raised champions and buried their leaders, all while continuing to embrace the historical roots of NASCAR," she added. "So, with all due respect, please understand that when you tell us it doesn't make sense to partner with us after 7 years is dejecting and truly disappointing."

NASCAR president Steve O'Donnell, who testified this week, was asked about a text message he sent to Ben Kennedy, nephew of Jim France that read: "Jim is now reading Heather's letter out loud and swearing every other sentence." Pressed by plaintiffs attorney Jeffrey Kessler as to what France was saying as he read the letter, O'Donnell instead said the chairman never swore.

"That's what I wrote, but he was not doing that," O'Donnell testified. "We were all taken aback by the letter."

I think Jim was frustrated, as we all were." □



Michael Jordan, co-owner of 23XI Racing, sits in his pit box during a NASCAR Cup Series auto race at Talladega Superspeedway, Sunday, Oct. 6, 2024, in Talladega, Ala.

Associated Press.

FIFA gives President Donald Trump a peace prize in a departure from its traditional focus on sport

By SEUNG MIN KIM

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump was awarded the new FIFA peace prize on Friday at the 2026 World Cup draw giving the spectacle to set matchups for the quadrennial soccer tournament even more of a Trumpian flair.

Trump, who has openly campaigned for the Nobel Peace Prize, had been heavily favored to win the newly created FIFA prize. He and FIFA president Gianni Infantino are close allies, and Infantino had made clear that he thought Trump should have won the Nobel for his efforts to broker a ceasefire in Gaza.

The U.S. president was awarded the prize that Infantino said was a "beautiful medal for you that you can wear everywhere you want to go." Trump promptly placed the medal around his neck.

The certificate that Infantino handed Trump recognizes the U.S. president



President Donald Trump is presented with the inaugural FIFA Peace Prize by FIFA President Gianni Infantino during the 2026 FIFA World Cup draw at the Kennedy Center, Friday, Dec. 5, 2025, in Washington.

Associated Press.

for his actions to "promote peace and unity around the world."

"This is what we want from a leader a leader that cares about the people," Infantino said about Trump, who was also presented with a gold trophy with his name

on it that depicts hands holding up the world. The FIFA leader said to Trump "this is your prize, this is your peace prize."

Trump thanked his family, including his wife, first lady Melania Trump, and praised the leaders of the

other two host nations Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum in his brief remarks, saying the coordination with the countries has been "outstanding."

"This is truly one of the great

honors of my life," Trump said. Infantino has often spoken about soccer as a unifier for the world, but the prize is a departure from the federation's traditional focus on sport.

The FIFA president was also on hand Thursday at the newly renamed Donald J. Trump Institute of Peace in Washington, where Trump and the leaders of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda signed a deal aimed at ending the conflict in eastern Congo.

FIFA has described the prize as one that rewards "individuals who have taken exceptional and extraordinary actions for peace and by doing so have united people across the world."

The award to Trump came during a week in which his administration has been engaged in shuttle diplomacy to try to end the war in Ukraine, while also under scrutiny for lethal strikes on alleged drug boats in the Caribbean and as Trump hardens his rhetoric against immigrants. □

Chiba is surprise leader after figure skating favorites falter at Grand Prix Final

By JIM ARMSTRONG

Associated Press

NAGOYA, Japan (AP)

— Japan's Mone Chiba emerged as the surprise leader in the women's short program at the figure skating Grand Prix Final after several favorites stumbled

on Friday.

Three-time world champion Kaori Sakamoto and defending Grand Prix Final champion Amber Glenn made costly errors on their opening jumps and finished fifth and sixth respectively. Skating last and real-

izing she had a golden opportunity to take the lead, Chiba appeared nervous at the start of her routine but settled down to land a triple flip-triple toe loop combination, a double axel and a triple lutz for 77.27 points.

World champion Alysa Liu of the United States was second with 75.79 followed by Ami Nakai of Japan on 73.91. "I was very nervous at the start," Chiba said. "But I was able to land all three jumps and do my spins and steps so I feel good about my skate."

Liu landed a triple flip, a double axel and a triple lutz-triple loop combination and said she was pleased with her performance.

"I had a goal going into the short program," Liu said, "to do a better triple loop than

my other companions and to breathe throughout." Sakamoto could manage only a double lutz on her opening jump and finished in fifth place with 69.40 points.

"More than feeling the pressure, I feel like I defeated myself," said an emotional Sakamoto, who will retire after this season. "I will go into the free program tomorrow with nothing to lose."

Defending champion Glenn had a single axel on her opening jump instead of a triple and was sixth with 66.85 points. Glenn completed the triple cleanly in practice but couldn't pull it off in competition.

Friday's result further underscored that there was no clear favorite heading toward the Milan Cortina Olympics in February.

Further complicating prospects was the International Skating Union allowing Russian skaters to compete in Milan Cortina as neutrals but only in the men's and women's competitions.

They include 18-year-old Adeliia Petrosian and Petr Gumennik.

Petrosian has won two straight national titles and is unbeaten over the past two seasons, winning eight straight domestic events. Petrosian has been landing triple axels and quads in competition while no other woman has done so consistently this year.

In the pairs, world champions Riku Miura and Ryuichi Kihara of Japan held on to their slim lead from the short program to win the gold medal despite a couple of errors in the free skate. □



Mone Chiba, of Japan, competes in the women's short program segment at the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final in Nagoya, central Japan, Friday, Dec. 5, 2025.

Associated Press.